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# AN ADDRESS

TO

# KING COTTON

BY

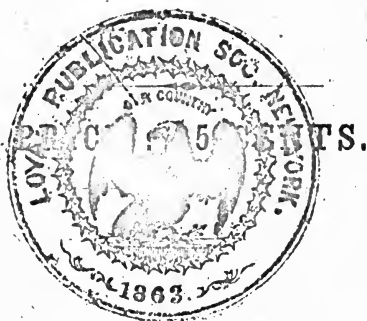
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# AN ADDRESS TO KING COTTON.

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SIR :

You have committed a wrong act. It is not everything to be a king, even with only a bale for a throne : one must also be faithful to the Constitution. I talk to you without flattery, and as I have broached the subject, I shall go to the end of the reel. But first let me throw a retrospective glance at the past.

If in the 16th century, at the time when Thomas Morus wrote his *Utopia*..... but this is going too far back. Suppose in the 17th century, while Fénelon was elaborating his kingdom of Salente, a seer had spoken to this effect : "I have found a telescope that plunges into time as the other fathoms space ! But my glass shows me something still more marvellous than the *Utopia* of Morus, or the *Salente* of the archbishop of Cambrai.

Beyond the setting sun, on the other side of the Atlantic, I see a tract of continent twenty times as large as France, with two sides on two oceans, the one looking toward Europe, the other toward Asia. One might deem it the middle of the world, the central empire. At the first glance it seems an uncouth territory, overgrown with jungles and submerged by swamps. Some sixty rivers, nameless as yet, flow at random, barring one's path in all directions. There are no inhabitants but the wolf and the bison, save here and there a man if we may thus call carnivorous creatures, who after six thousand years of reflection have been unable to acquire any other talent than that of lighting a fire at night by which to cook their food.

And yet this chaotic soil, rude as the deluge left it, will be chosen by good men, banished from England on account of a dubious point of biblical interpretation, as an asylum for themselves, their wives and children, so that they may have a right to interpret the Bible in their own way.

How many will they number ? A mere handful of men, barely a boat load. They will sing a psalm upon landing in this new hemisphere and then with a pious glance at the snow-covered soil, they will take up the pickax.

They will have but one ambition ; prayer and labor—prayer in order to gain the life to come and labor to gain time for prayer. After clearing the seaboard they will bravely attack the barriers of the untrodden forest ; they will deliver the soil, buried and imprisoned beneath a night of verdure ; they will show it openly to heaven and heaven will let its dews and harvests descend upon it.

Forward, ever advancing, go ahead, will be the motto of this heroic race.

This rugged land conceals the germ of kindly usefulness. It awaits but a word from man to pass into a state of civilization. There are immense lakes, or rather seas, destined to create a coasting trade; and the sixty rivers, although obstacles at the outset, will become later great highways, binding together the various centres of population. And at last the great Mississippi, the "father of waters," will draw all these navigable streams in his course of a thousand leagues and bear them along in triumph with their fleets to the Gulf of Mexico.

And they will advance ever and ever westward, (for civilization follows the course of the sun,) and wherever they go they will find the same climate as in England; the same winter and the same summer. They may believe if they will, that they have brought the seasons of Europe with them, sewn in the folds of their cloaks. They will be able to carry to their new home the productions of the old country; their wheat and hemp; their gardens and orchards. They will be able to carry with them the companions of their early life,—the ox, the horse, the dog, the sheep, &c. Men and flocks will land in families, and after a voyage of fifteen hundred leagues, they will seem to have passed to the other shore of their own country.

## II.

But a day will come when this colony, scarcely a century old, born of labor and multiplied by labor, will wish to rise and rank as a nation, and manage its own household. Then it will have to struggle desperately with the mother-country, the first maritime power, and perhaps also the first military power of Europe. But North America will have confidence in her destiny. An inward voice will say to her: "Do what you fear to do! After the strife with nature, comes the strife with England. This will only be changing the battlefield, and America will win the day. She will force England to sign the certificate of birth of the United States, and on the morrow the Atlantic will bear for the first time a flag with but thirteen stars as yet."

I do not know how or by what secret instinct more powerful than reflection the American republic will find the most perfect form of government to occupy and rule half a continent; but it will be found, whether at the first or the second trial it matters little. Man, master of himself in everything concerning the individual; a common independence in all his acts regarding his religious existence; corporate sovereignty in everything of interest to the people constituted as a state; and lastly the confederacy as the supreme empire in all matters in which the states are jointly interested, this is the American Constitution. In other words it is social life copied from nature and written down upon paper.

The sovereign people will delegate power to it, still always retaining their sovereignty. Administration, juries, legislation, government and all power will emanate from the people to be restored to the people at the expiration of their mandate.

Public election will constitute in some degree a distilling apparatus which will be constantly at work, and through which public opinion will evaporate in power. In addition to all this a president will be elected who will rule over thirty millions of men for the low sum of one hundred and twenty thousand francs per annum and who will live in a cottage. At the end of his term he will disappear in the crowd and take to sowing wheat and slover.

An admirable organization is this, producing at the same time a double movement of expansion and concentration ; an expansion colonising from without, a concentration binding the various colonies together in one united country. And thus the American Constitution will surround liberty with as many breastworks as there may be states in the confederacy, so that of all impossibilities the most impossible would be the hypothesis of a Yankee Caesar with his foot upon the corpse of the republic striving to mount to sovereign power.

As American emigration clears away what will be called simply a territory, the starry constitution will travel westward almost step by step in company with the nomadic labor of the pioneer. When this new territory shall have attained a legal amount of population, the constitution will take hold of it at once and incorporate it in the family of states ; and one more star will shine upon the banner of the republic.

The confederacy will thus grow constantly from these cuttings, embracing all the newly-hatched colonies in the West in the simple bonds of a unity that will protect all the integral parts of the Union without ever being able to hold any one of them in bondage. Still who will believe it ? This model constitution will result in a degree from chance or if you prefer it from a compromise. A hidden destiny will doubtless dictate it, as though it had one day to support a world.

### III.

Liberty alone possesses creative power ; and thanks to liberty the American republic will expand in space—man will outstrip time in speed. When the twelfth or the fifteenth son of the same father reaches the age of reason, he will harness up a wagon and load it with the emigrant's Spartan outfit ; then embrace his family and drive away.

Where will he go ? To the great West. After picking out a suitable tract of public land, he will attack the forest with his ax, sow his corn in a clearing, and build his log cabin on the outskirts of the wood. When he has raised a roof above his head, he will think that two heads might rest there as well as one ; after this reflection he will light his pipe, get into the saddle, and return to the village of his childhood.

He will go there to seek a companion, and will marry the first comer. He may draw blindly in the lottery, but he will always find the spirit of order and labor. Virtue is the only dowry of America's daughters. As to any other dowry, it will not be thought of. How are the children to live ? They will emigrate in their turn.

As soon as the pioneer receives the nuptial blessing, he will return to his log cabin, taking his wife with him ; but this time he will take furniture and cattle along. Sometime later, a traveling missionary sent to spread the Gospel in the wilderness, will check his horse before a newly built farm house, at the sight of a swarm of little ones playing on the threshold under a portico of fragrant vines.

Man draws near to man in the chemistry of society, as one atom attracts another, in another order of composition. A new cabin will spring up in the neighborhood of the one already built, for reasons both of sympathy and safety. Soon manufacturing industry will compete with agriculture. The blacksmith will light his forge fire by the side of the homestead, to hammer out his ploughshares ; the wheelwright will follow the blacksmith, and then the carpenter, and so on, until the tailor arrives. Agriculture disperses and

manufactures concentrate. The village will owe its birth to the latter. Need I designate the first public edifice to be built with the savings of the community? It will be a schoolhouse.

And why should it not? Is not the Bible the worship of the Protestant pioneer? Does not his piety come from reading? Is it not the first evidence of a free citizen of a free country to be able to read at least his newspaper? Religion will first lodge in the schoolhouse: but in course of time it will have a separate residence: a church with its steeple will arise and the church bells will tell the winds of the birth of a new community.

Should there exist any local circumstances favorable to its development the community will grow almost magically. What was but a village will change into a little town, then into an ordinary sized town, and at last into a great city, the metropolis of a hundred thousand souls. A hundred thousand, what am I saying, *four* hundred thousand, and all this, within the life of one man, and upon a soil where only yesterday the buffalo browsed at liberty.

What will it become then, when steam gives American civilization a soul equal to its aspirations? Everything to be done thenceforth,—agricultural or industrial—must be done by machinery. The soil must be tilled, and the harvest reaped by machinery. The entire surface of the earth will become one immense machine, ever panting with labor. Armed with steam power, North America will defy impossibilities, and even attempt to imitate miracles. For example, a railroad one thousand leagues in length, will be laid down, and the engine darting through the immensity of space, will call up with a shrill whistle, the yet buried phantom of future cities, and these cities, will spring from the ground at the call of steam, to take their places in the sunlight.

#### IV.

The news of this great prosperity and its unprecedented rapidity will cross the sea, and the people of the old world, deprived of their share in the soil will cross the Atlantic, and cover the predestined land of the West with a living alluvium. It will be a crusade of labor. All the energy of Europe, (for it takes strong nerve to submit to expatriation), will thus concur to swell the energy of America; and from their combination, and from the action and reaction of their double electricity a new and unexpected race will arise; one that will grow an inch in each generation.

The Saxon element will prove the richest soil, and will give the deepest impress to this new civilization. It will lead foreign emigrants to the worship of labor and of liberty, the parent of labor. It will fulfil a purpose similar to the great tun at Heidelberg, into which new wine was poured each year, that it might at once partake of the nature of the old. Then a being hitherto unknown will appear; the last type of man; man master of himself; man his own sovereign, his own policeman, his own priest; the I absolute, the Yankee. He will not wait for the government to protect him, he will protect himself, nor for the State to enrich him, he will make his own fortune; nor wait for the government to designate his religion in the budget, for he will choose his own religion himself, supporting it out of his savings.

There will be no more oppression, either of conscience or any other species; no oppression of one class by another, or of all classes of society by a permanent army. North America will only have an army for appearance

sake, consisting at most of twelve thousand men, disseminated in little bands over the entire extent of her territory. There, there will be no unpleasant traces of the past, no law of primogeniture, no exclusive academies, no embroidery of distinctive rank, no crosses and decorations, no cringing courtiers, no sinecure officers, no charity under the name of reward. Men will be estimated at their real value; nothing will be respected save work and money—the incarnation of labor; but it will have to be earned by the sweat of one's brow, for the *Dolce far niente* will be looked upon in America as a robbery committed upon society in general. On the other hand every sort of trade will become glorious. Work, no matter in what manner; be what you list, bootmaker, tailor, gardener or lawyer; choose your own calling, provided that you loyally furnish your tribute of labor. In America every trade has its own nobility; the President of the republic may be chosen from a carpenter's shop.

A seer might have spoken thus two centuries since; but had he done so, he would have been treated as a visionary, he might perhaps even been publicly burnt, as duly attainted and convicted of dealings with the evil one. And still the prophecy would have been but an anticipation of the reality; for if a nation has ever existed in the universe that has done honor to the species, that nation is North America, with its motto, "God and Liberty," and which, with the Bible in one hand and the ax in the other, has cleared the surface of a world in a twinkling, and shown man in all the splendor of virtue.

In the very air of this new country, there is an indefinable breathing of its juvenile nature, an inexplicable strength that expands one's chest, an exuberant healthfulness in its exhalations that fortifies both body and mind. There is in the daily labors of the pioneer, alone with Providence, a something of religion which in a manner elevates the soul to the mountain tops. In this poetical and odorous laboratory of agriculture, with no roof but the heavens, no boundary save the horizon, there exists a continual resemblance to the Infinite, reminding man of his ultimate destiny.

But while the American race was growing great by labor, what were you doing, Sire, on your part, you and your partisans? You were looking jealously upon the constantly increasing prosperity of your Western neighbor, for whom you felt a fraternal friendship like that of Cain. You were conspiring secretly in order to establish the kingdom of cotton and the supremacy of cotton shirts upon the ruins of the republic.

But you were so unfortunate as to have been born too near the sun, in a colony of bad origin whose godfather was the prince of libertines, and whose godmother was the scum of the jacobite army. The first viceroy called by Locke's constitution to the rule of Carolina was, I believe, General Monk, a bedizened traitor who sold the liberty of his country for money. Your ancestor was a scoundrel, Sire; and you have not disgraced your descent.

## V.

Why then do you wish to rend asunder this splendid American republic the joy and glory of humanity? We must know it for the instruction of this century, and that man may learn to do his duty alway despite everything. The American Constitution certainly compassed the ultimatum of wisdom; but it lacked courage in one clause, and this weakness was destined one day to compromise the very existence of the confederacy. Provi-

dence does not allow evil to remain in what is good. When it has once entered it acts like the lead in a wound ; either the wound expels the missile or the metal aggravates the wound until death ensues.

When America became possessed of liberty slavery already existed in a portion of the country : but the day that she solemnly proclaimed before God the right of every man to happiness, she should have placed the reality in harmony with the principle, without futile distinctions. She was afraid of justice and dared neither abolish nor recognize slavery ; she did not even dare name it. It was tacitly permitted as though a question of this nature could be passed over and avoided in silence ; but in truth its solution was entrusted to time.

But time only accepts such drafts by doubling the debt of the past. The longer emancipation was put off the more aggravated did the difficulty become, and to you, Sire, is due the credit of the spread of this scourge. The very moment that some poor devil, accidentally but honestly, found an infernal machine to pick cotton, you transformed the South into a cotton plantation. And in order to cultivate this plantation the special labor of the slave became necessary.

What is a slave ? Those black metaphysicians who wish to elevate servitude into a theory in order to quiet their consciences, give us such a poetic idyl of negro existence that we needs must re-assert the truth in the euphemism "involuntary labor."

Slavery is thus termed so as to spare the delicacy of "cars polite." You, yourself, Sire, posted as you are in the matter, never call it except by a periphrase. In your code, if I am not mistaken, you designate it the "peculiar institution." Barefaced as you are in reality, you at least show humanity in this title ; and in this you imitate the inquisition which always dealt in euphemisms toward its victims ; thus the torture room was termed the "*casa santa*" and upon the stake was inscribed the word "*misericordia*."

But what is a slave ? A slave is a man robbed of his soul, he and his race, until the end of posterity ; a man doomed from father to son to think with the brains and will through the volition of another ; a man divested of the first sacred right of man ; to wit, individuality ; a being changed from his nature ; in a word an artificial monster, a moral ennuich, undeserving of the deprivation. The church castrates the child to make him sing well, but you, Sire, you castrate him that he may pick your cotton. This is the only difference.

If in order to render a man a slave it were necessary to cut off one of his legs or arms, the sight of the knife and of the stump would certainly in the end excite pity ; and pity once raised what might not ensue.

But the white man, having tired of cutting and maiming, finally wished to leave the negro entire. In order to transform a man into an automaton it suffices to take away his soul gently ; and as this requires neither knife nor surgical operation, as it causes neither outcries nor bloodshed the world looks on quietly. After all it is only a metaphysical murder committed in the realms of the invisible. We do not see or touch it and we sleep with a sound conscience. And yet, whatever may be said in the country of yellow fever or sugar cane, there is more cruelty in mutilating him physically. Place the one against the other and were fate to summon us to choose we should certainly prefer the loss of a leg to that of our intelligence, we had rather lose an arm than our will.

• Servitude in common with every human institution has its own logic. Emanating from barbarity it leads from cruelty to cruelty, as result follows result in reasoning.

You feed the slave while in infancy (I had nearly added while in old

age also ; but forced labor beneath a tropical sun rarely allows him to grow old) therefore the negro must earn by his daily labor not only his present but his past sustenance ; but the negro has no interest to stimulate him to work, so you supply its place with the whip. This is your idea of the perfection of labor ; but this is not all : discipline must be maintained in this band of scourged creatures, giddy and noisy as children

The raw hide teaches him to keep order and to love his master or mistress. Both in France and in England by a braminical species of law cruelty to animals is punishable ; but in America the skin of man is not held in such high esteem. There the negro's blood is shed upon the slightest provocation, for a petty blunder.

It was evening. The sun was fading away in a golden mist. Upon a verandah beneath the shade of the blossoming vanilla a young creole woman was enjoying the cool evening. She was a mother for the first time and the mysterious feeling of maternity thrilled her heart. She looked up into the heavens dreamily, when suddenly she heard a piercing cry, then a stifled sigh. For an instant she listened, then with a smile she bent over the odor of a rose. In this attitude she was beautiful as the Madonna.

A pregnant negress had been tied to a ladder and they were whipping her poetically by the light of the setting sun. Do you know what she had done? She had broken a sancer. They had to take a round out of the ladder to make room for the bosom where the Almighty had deposited a soul.

## VI.

Sire, you go regularly to church every Sunday. You must consent therefore, out of respect to the gospel, to allow the slave to become, if not a man, at least a christian. Let him be baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and by virtue of his baptism he will be granted a place in the city of the dead and equality in paradise. But there is a slight drawback which you did not at first foresee, in that the Bible constitutes the whole Protestant worship. You should therefore, Sire, as a Protestant, teach the slave to read so as to make him a good christian. But when he learns to read what will he read?

You may refuse to allow the slave to exercise his intelligence, but you cannot root this intelligence out of his brain. His intellect works even under the yoke, although confusedly as though under a fog. What would it be then—were his mind to become educated and were he to learn that you were no better than himself, and say to you let it be decided between us ! Man to man !

You foresaw the danger of this, and in order to avert it you made his ignorance the safeguard of slavery. Keeping the slave in ignorance, Sire, this has been your policy. You have closed the schools to the negro, and have hidden the alphabet from him. The Scythians put out the bodily eyes of their slaves as a prudential measure ; but you treat your slaves infinitely more cruelly, for you put out their mental eyes ; and the negro, who is created after God's image like yourself, will go henceforth from the cradle to the grave with night in his soul and night on his face.

You have elevated him to christianity, probably that he may practice the gospel, and the gospel condemns promiscuousness. You take pains that the blacks shall intermarry, and a clergyman blesses their union. Why should it be blessed ? Rather let it be cursed and the woman be rendered barren, for

she will only bring forth heirs to slavery. And the children born of this love, whom she has nourished at her breast and cherished in her heart what will become of them when they reach a marketable age? The master will send them to market, and marriage, the most moral of all institutions, becomes but another torment added to slavery.

Without irony, let the inmates of the negro pen be considered simply as male and female; let them come together and bring forth after the lapse of nine months; let them mix indiscriminately; let them meet promiscuously and then forget each other; this will do for negroes. Why have any marriages at all? And the young white girl, Sire, your own daughter will receive her education in this school. I say nothing of your son: I know already what his first love affair will be.

Occasionally the slave takes to flight. In local phraseology, he *vamoses*. The swamps are deserted and the underwood dense. By sleeping during the day and traveling at night, he may be able to gain the border. What do you do to recapture him? You train up a pack of bloodhounds to track the runaway. The slave owner has a right to hunt him, and if he chooses to risk the thousand dollars represented by his human game, he may shoot at him, and kill him, — the law allows it.

And these nameless crimes, these insults to God and man, are not repugnant to, and do not even astonish the gentle blue-eyed creoles, the wives and sisters of the knights of the whip! The frequency of their occurrence has to a great extent made them a normal state of affairs, an old established tradition, rendered legitimate by custom. What in fact is there to complain of in the negro's destiny? Does he not get enough to eat when he is hungry? Does he not dance at Christmas? Yes, eat or die, such is thy lot; King Cotton has declared it. And if thou shouldst incautiously murmur at thy portion, thy master will send thee to the plantation executioner with an order for fifty lashes, payable to bearer, and the official will pay them at sight without further formality.

You degrade the slave at pleasure; you put him up at auction on a block like butcher's meat. Draw near, here is a negro, or better still a negress; you may examine her at leisure, undress her, turn her round, discuss her price before her, stipulate against any hidden imperfection, and then take possession of the merchandise. If she groans and weeps you may take her away tied to the tail of your horse; the town of Raleigh in North Carolina has witnessed such an act.

And after you have debased the negro, and corrupted him by his degradation, how, Sire, do you satisfy your conscience? You make the slave himself responsible for the effects of slavery: you use his baseness as an argument to maintain him in servitude. But who has branded him with ignominy except you, his master, his second creator? And you have recourse to a second crime in order to justify the first.

You lower the negro to the level of a brute, and then you say that he is not a man. And whose fault is this, I pray; He is not a man, you say; but is not the negress a woman? Yes, when she is young and well made—this you condescend to prove. And the profit is all your own, for later you will be able to sell your own child. A mulatto is more valuable than a full-blooded African.

I will take your word for it that the negro is despicable; but there is one still more despicable than he, to wit; you, yourself, King Cotton. The slave is debased, but you are cruel. Which is to be preferred, a vitiated nature or crime? Moreover the negro is your work, and the work is a criterion of the workman.

The slave being degraded by his master, degrades the latter in his turn.

The master loses his sense of right and wrong ; the planter does wrong without even suspecting that he is doing so. The Cæsarian folly of despotism extinguishes the last symptom of conscience and kills remorse. He is candid in his own crime.

Immorality begets immorality. The burning soil of the South devours the laborer, who can only live there about seven years upon an average. The consumption exceeds the supply, and slavery might die out for want of the raw material; but in the border states, rejoicing in the "peculiar institution," there are good fathers of families, prudently intent upon establishing their sons and endowing their daughters. These men will originate the ingenious idea of profiting by the mildness of a temperate climate to breed up human cattle on a large scale.

The prudent men will seek out well-proportioned brood negresses who will produce first-class stock which they will subsequently dispose of further South at high rates. Sire, I congratulate you upon this stroke of genius : you have invented a new sort of conscription. You may say, as another king once said : "I have so many men to spend upon my battle-field."

But the breeding district will not suffice to supply the slave-market ; something more will be required, and despite the law, despite the penalty of death provided by the law for the slaver captain, the Southron will boldly keep up the slave trade in the open light of day. You will protect him secretly ; you will interpose your authority between the criminal and the gallows. When a cruiser brings to Charleston a slaver captured in the exercise of his vocation, the planter-judge will declare that the honest dealer in human flesh has been calumniated, and that he was sailing along the African coast for purely philanthropic purposes, solely in order to offer the advantages of commerce to the black race.

But before long the farce of this underhand traffic, continually pursued with impunity, will prove too revolting to the uprightness of the South, and some honest citizen will demand the reestablishment of the slave trade openly and undisguisedly. This man merits mention. He is called Doctor Thorwell, and his name should be nailed like a rook to Jefferson Davis' door.

I do not say, Sire, that your Southern vassals are altogether bloodthirsty men, of repulsive mien, whose clothes reek with the professional odor of butchers. On the contrary, they are perfect gentlemen, agreeable, amiable, and always ready to do the honors of their homes with smiling, constant courtesy. They have debts, white hands, and good manners. They are good hunters, riders, and pistol shots. They are fond of painting, music and literature. They look upon labor as derogatory, therefore they do not work ; but they possess all the charms of aristocratic slothfulness, including good-breeding, good-taste, and well-lined purses.

Do not fear that they will ever doubt the rightfulness of slavery. Their theologians of all denominations—and they are more subtle than the most wily casuists of the old school of Ignatius Loyola—have long since relieved the conscience of the planter of all anxiety on this head. These religion-mongers who, like Judas Iscariot, would sell Christ a second time, open their Bible with a pious air, and through the assistance of the Holy Ghost they discover that the Lord eternally empowers the white men of Louisiana to buy black flesh for their use, and to whip the same *ad libitum*.

Whenever a crime is committed in this world there will always be a creature in clerical guise upon its trace, ready to canonize the deed and make God have a hand in it. *Omnis potestas a Deo*. Your chaplain, Sire, has no doubt communicated this text to your august ear, and demonstrated to you from the pulpit that you possess a right of life and death over your fellow-creatures for the public welfare of Cotton.

VII.

Still, North America permitted matters to take their course. She seemed to have good-naturedly consented to the scandal of a republic in two parts, with liberty inscribed upon one page of its constitution and slavery upon the other ; but liberty possesses such virtue in itself that if you link it to servitude one of two results must ensue ; either servitude will stifle it, or it will efface the former.

The day was destined to come when men worthy of the name should examine the conscience of the republic and demand whether the living paradox of the "peculiar institution" should still longer dishonor the country of Washington. A voice, low and indistinct at first, rises from Penn's colony, pronouncing the word "abolition;" but timidly like a secret whispered in one's ear.

This first protest astonished, and then irritated even the immaculate North. Why raise thus unseasonably a difficulty of this nature ? Why disturb the quiet of those who saw nothing and the peace of those who did not wish to see anything, of those who turned aside their heads and kept on their way ? Therefore the people of Philadelphia grew indignant and set fire to the hall where abolitionism held its first meeting.

Then Channing began to speak, and by the evangelical serenity of his eloquence he gently brought North America to blush for this and to harmonise her policy with that liberty decreed by the heart of man before it was countersigned by the constitution. From that moment the abolition party weighed in the balance of public opinion with all the weight of justice.

But woe to the ingenuous apostle simple-minded enough to believe, that, under a *régime* of absolute liberty, he had a right to utter his opinions aloud in the streets. If, by chance, he had the impudence to show a lack of respect for the "peculiar institution" or to assert casually that slavery was perhaps not the beau-ideal of civilization, when in the land of good-breeding, the home of your rich, fast planters, well gloved and curled, elegant in Panama hats and white pantaloons, that very instant the unfortunate abolitionist found himself seized by the collar to be tarred and feathered in the State House ; for the knights of the lash are a jovial race and fond of a joke in their idle moments. When they have no slaves to punish with their lordly hands, they love to enjoy a free, hearty laugh, especially after a "cocktail." They hold that since the days of Molière a man daubed with tar is the wittiest thing invented, and they repeat the joke *ad nauseam*.

Still, experience showed the relative value of free labor and slave labor. While free labor in the north of America was incessantly invading the wilderness, peopling the desert, drawing the stout sons of Europe to its ranks, and jointly with them transforming a desert into a nation at every step, servile labor, despite the development of the cultivation of cotton, and notwithstanding that it monopolized the European markets, was barely enabled to keep a people, burdened with debt, at the same level during the same period. With progress on the one hand and stagnation on the other must result the following consequence.

The Senate represents the States. So many states send so many Senators, whatever be their population ; but owing to the increasing flow of emigration the North was alone able to improvise new states and consequently to send new Senators to Congress. The North, therefore, year after year, had a majority in the Senate ; and as the section inclined more and more toward abolitionism, the day drew near to put the slavery question to the vote.

What did the South do in order to restore the equilibrium and retain the majority? Being unable to create new states by their labor, they essayed to conquer such by dint of arms and to sow slavery by force. Thus they got up the Mexican expedition and imposed involuntary labor upon Texas. Labor in vain, the North was always ahead.

The South, feeling that their human property was in danger, thought fit to play a bold game, and on their part to threaten to split the republic in twain. They thus succeeded in obtaining from the easy-going good-natured North, first the Missouri compromise, then its violation, then the extradition law, then the decision of the United States Court placing slave property on a footing with all other kinds of property in every state in the Union. This amounted to rendering slavery universal. The South went too far. Destiny looked on and cried, Halt!

## VIII.

But one day an honest man named John Brown tried to discover whether there were any pulsation left beneath the negro's cotton shirt. This was an error, I admit. You seized the noble champion of humanity, you tried him and you hung him. Bravo, Sire, I recognize you by this act of clemency, for you could have burnt him alive at the stake! But when he was executed a great shudder swept through the North of America. Thenceforth the sacred cause of abolitionism was invested with the halo of martyrdom.

It had already sounded its tocsin, in the shape of a paltry little book written by a woman; and it was less than a book, it was a novel. You smiled compassionately at it, did you not? Your children may cry over it for a long while. America read Mrs. Stowe's elegy and bewailed her state; and the presidency of Abraham Lincoln sprang from the presidency of Uncle Tom.

I breathe again. I have rid me of a nightmare, for the time for justice has arrived: right is not a lie. Scarcely had the South learned the election of Lincoln before with their impious hand, already polluted with the blood of the slave, they dared to strike their mother, to strangle the Constitution, throwing to the winds the common glory of their common country, telling the Union their intention to walk thenceforward independently with the negro trampled beneath their feet.

You, Sire, and you alone, without provocation or excuse, have broken the compact which you signed and swore to keep. In your rebellious folly you said to yourself, "What have I to fear from the North, from the lovers of peace and dollars? Will they dare to raise an army for the abstract satisfaction of unity? And supposing that they dare, I need only hold fast to my bales of cotton. At one blow I can cause a famine in all the markets of Europe, and array all the spindles and looms of Manchester and Mulhouse against these fanatical Yankees, and their Constitution. Then England and France must of necessity,—either jointly or separately—intervene in favor of slavery in order to save their cotton."

And if they hesitate, if they shrink from armed mediation, what will they do with their disbanded hosts of cotton spinners? Will they be allowed to wander at random, pale and ragged, like the spectres of famine, about the extinguished furnaces and silent factories, until at last, tired of suffering they make one desperate effort and throw themselves upon the bayonets of their countrymen? Certainly not; France as well as England must prefer to open the Southern markets at any cost, even by force of shot and shell.

This is the impious calculation you made when you rebelled against the Constitution. You condemned the poorer classes of Europe to want for work, in other words, to a slow death, so as to preserve slavery in all its purity ; after adding another crime to your list, you hauled down the federal flag waving over Fort Sumter.

During the last ten years, Sir, you have been silently preparing for civil war. You furnished the first example of a conspirator in the Cabinet. You have overspread the South with an immense network of rabid democracy. Long since you organized the secret society of the Knights of the Golden Circle, the three golden circles inclosed the one within the other, with all the dexterity of a Chinese puzzle. The first was to separate the second, and the second the third, and the countersign passed from one to the other without the possibility of discovering who had given it.

You chose your time well. The Constitution places an interval of three months between the election of the President and his inauguration ; during that period, Buchanan was finishing his presidential term, like a gloomy sunset. He was a man after your own heart, a mind devoted to slavery, a magnetic needle turned to the South pole instead of toward the North, and he conscientiously employed the balance of his presidency in betraying the Union.

Treason is perhaps too forcible an expression—he was not exactly a traitor. But when the rebellion boldly declared itself, when civil war was openly begun, Buchanan was most conveniently affected with a wilful dimness of ocular and mental vision ; he saw nothing, and knew nothing. He sent all the Northern ordnance to the South ; he sent the army to the Western frontier in order to prevent the imminent invasion of a dozen redskins who threatened to pillage the New York banks.

Thus you had three months start of the North. You took them unawares. You had them within range, you had an army while they had but militia. They rushed heedlessly against you at Bull Run, and you butchered them. So there was nothing left but to admit the defeat and beg for mercy!

By no means ! While still under the first shock of the disaster, this peaceful laborious people, thus villainously attacked and abominably massacred in ambuscades, sent back a shout of defiance, and staked everything in the struggle, to its last man and its last dollar.

Heroism is contagious. America offered so magnificent a spectacle to right-minded Europeans, that young princes, ignorant of democracy through the accident of their birth, deemed it an honor to win their spurs beneath the banner of the Republic. The fact is greatly to their credit ; I say it without flattery, for between their principles and our principles, lies the broad Atlantic. For their account I hope, that while serving under the star-spangled banner, they may have learned that there is something higher than princes, that there is the citizen.

## IX.

During this time, Sir, you sent agents to Europe to decoy public opinion to the side of slavery. Your legates *à latere* are at this moment dispensing a prodigious amount of philanthropy. They say, or make others say, in affecting tones ; see, blood is being poured out like water ; battles constantly succeed each other and always without result ; after two years slaughter in line upon the banks of the Potomac the North has been unable to advance a step without falling back immediately afterward. The mari-

time navions of Europe should throw themselves between the combatants in imitation of the Sabines. The interests of humanity are at stake as well as your industrial interests.

This is what the missionaries from the South preach to the four corners of the earth. Do not delude yourself, Sir. Despite the suffering that your fratricidal struggle inflicts upon our country, you will not succeed in perverting public opinion ; you may try every avenue of publicity, but you will only find fickle partisans and doubtful friends of freedom. We have seen them at work, we know their record ; they like your despotism, not that they uphold slavery, for its name frightens them ; they would condemn the property and glorify the owner.

With such as these there can be no discussion ; they are known and refuted. There are, however, in the ranks of the French press, partisans of liberty like ourselves, who think themselves able to defend what they call the principle of secession without offence to liberty. They say honestly that, with ourselves, they reject slavery in principle—with this addition, that the American republic is not a State, that it is a juxta-position of States, each of which has the right to withdraw from the Union and take its star from the flag.

The American republic not a State ! Verily, we must be asleep with our eyes open. According to this, Holland also was not a state in the seventeenth century ! Then Switzerland too, is not a nation at this hour of her history ; and when General Dufour crushed the Sonderbund insurrection, he committed in reality the same crime that Catherine was guilty of toward Poland !

What ! The North and the South of America one memorable day in the last century by common consent threw off the supremacy of the mother country, to enjoy it entirely in common ; they voted a federal constitution in common ; they built a federal capitol in common, where they instal and organize a federal legislative system in common and a federal presidency, a federal administration, a federal diplomacy, a federal army and navy, a federal mint, and later jointly also, they bought Louisiana from France and Florida from Spain with federal money, and again out of federal funds they armed forts and built arsenals for the universal defence of all their frontiers, and yet they are not a State, nor even a nation, but simply a handful of dust which the first gust of wind may disperse !

Read the constitution over again ! There you will see that the thirteen original states entered into a solemn agreement each one with the other, to form always one single national body. As long as the South held a majority in the republic, (and as a consequence of such majority the monopoly of the presidency, and with the presidency the disposal of the federal offices, a welcome gift for distribution among their party leaders) they never dreamed, that I know, of disputing the sacredness of the contract, or of contesting the legitimacy of a power which they monopolized for their advantage, and enjoyed among themselves.

And now that luck is against them, when they are in a minority, when it is the turn of the North to hold the presidency, after legally gaining it, the South complains of overbearing. They held the place long but now they are told to leave and make room for another. The grandee's honor is insulted : he puts on his hat and leaves in a rage, nothing but a duel to the death can avenge the affront.

X.

Since when has it been optional with one party to an agreement to annul the contract without the consent of the other party? A contract is entered into precisely in order to prevent such a contingency. Otherwise there would never be any treaty in the world and man's hand-writing would be but a writing upon sand. The fate of the world would be continually dependent upon the peculiar system of pitch and toss called military science.

Why was the thing called a constitution thought of, unless in order to prevent what the South is doing at this moment. Every nation, even when self-styled one and indivisible, must always run the risk of domestic quarrels; and there are but two means to decide the difference, war or the ballot box.

When war is resorted to the stronger crushes down the weaker until the latter rises up and crushes the conqueror in his turn—and thus war begets war without end, until the country after tearing itself to pieces with its own hands, expires in a convulsion of anarchy and disappears in a conquest.

If it is to be settled by the constitution, then, instead of appealing to the sword the verdict of public opinion will be sought: the struggle will be definitively settled by suffrage. The minority will respectfully agree to the decision of the majority as the expression of justice. This is a simple fiction for the benefit of the common weal, implying no irrevocable decree, for, according to the constitution itself, the minority always possess the right of reconsidering the subject before the people when what is lacking may be recovered.

Hitherto this has been the great rule in politics. But the South thought fit to make an exception. They willingly approved the ballot box when it gave them a majority, but when they found themselves in a minority they took up the musket. We must certainly admit the right to revolt or else proclaim the inviolability of tyranny, but recourse to force can never rank as a system. It can only be resorted to as a forlorn hope, and there must exist the sacred incentive of freedom to be gained in order to justify an upright man in assuming the tragical responsibility of a revolution.

But when all the advantages of liberty are combined, when a people are thus above public opinion, and with every means of redress at hand, what right can they hope to obtain by victory which they do not already possess? One of the best and most deserving features of the American Constitution is that it lends no species of plea for insurrection. Why, for instance, should the people of Illinois declare war against the Union, when the Union oppresses liberty in no section, but on the contrary everywhere guarantees it.

And yet, Sire, you have unsheathed the sword, and why? Had the negro race not been in existence you would not have dreamed of rebelling, for your rebellion will not give you a single additional right or guarantee. You have revolted for one object only, the maintenance of slavery. Hitherto nations have rebelled for liberty alone. Your subjects, Sire, will be the first that have risen to support despotism.

Your keep up your rebellion by means worthy of its origin. I do not allude to the reign of terror that you have created at home in order to stifle the murmurings of the loyal partisans of the Union who still look wistfully in the direction of their common home. Nor will I refer to the terrible cannibalism which a certain young Belgian *savant* has depicted in all its

terrible truthfulness. You have closed the door upon us, Sire, and hidder yourself from our sight. You are modest regarding your handiwork, leaving its perfections to be inferred rather than admired.

I speak only of your open and avowed acts; of your barbarous proclamations unworthy of Ghengis-Kan in which you condemned Union Generals and negro soldiers to the halter. And this is not merely a threat, for you have already carried the sentence into effect. Still you had a scruple; you might have simply hanged your black prisoners; but you preferred to shoot them. This is shorter and more honorable. Sire, your conduct is horrible.

After this what can it serve to mention the Alabama, a corsair that plunders and then sinks every merchant vessel in her path, brazenly violating the first law of privateering, for even privateering has its laws. We note this, Sire, and we see by your conduct that you are really the pirate king that rumor terms you. By your present acts we see that you need hypocrisy in order to wheedle some European power into an alliance. We can foresee to what extent you would carry your filibustering if victory could obliterate your revolt. You lay down the mask too soon, Sire. I despise you, for you lack sense.

## XI.

I know that there are men among us who feel a natural antipathy to the Yankee race. How can they like a people who never laugh and hardly smile, who speak but little and meditate eternally? What merit can be granted to a morose race who have, up to the present, failed to produce an actress or a milliner of any note, or even a racy specimen of their literature? They chew, smoke, and spit, and sit with their heels on the mantel-piece. How disgusting a spectacle to the goddess of liberty. At the theatre when they ought to hiss they applaud, and when they should applaud they hiss. Is not this turning the world upside down? You will soon see them wearing white mourning like the Chinese. And how about this democratic equality where one has but one seat in a steamboat or railroad car, where the millionaire must sit side by side with his bootblack! A certain French lady, tolerably well known in print, even goes so far as to affirm that the Yankee sleeps with his boots on. Pray how do you know, madam? Did you look under the counterpane?

The Yankee, I admit, possesses the defect of being a meditative man. He is as taciturn as the Western wilderness. He does not slap you on the shoulder at the first meeting; he does not jump into familiarity at the second; he does not borrow a dollar or your wife the third time he sees you; but is this a fair reason why one should set one'sself against right, because the Yankee happens to represent right, dry and unadorned. And is it not an evidence of being prejudiced against right when you place the North and the South on a footing of equality? Peace is desirable in the interest of humanity, we are told. Undoubtedly it is to be desired; but how is it to be obtained?

Can it be secured by recognizing the schism of the South as a perfected act, and by advising the North to accept this basis? This view of the question would encourage the South to continue the war; it would lead them to believe that they were secretly supported by some great European nation; and further, it would be an unmerited blow to the North, legalizing rebellion by I know not what sort of diplomatic chicanery.

When an established government permits foreign intervention between the constitution which it should defend, and a portion of its people in rebellion against this constitution, it does not negotiate ; it resigns its rights as England would have done had she accepted the mediation of Austria at the time of Edward's expedition in Scotland. But the North, irritated and humiliated as they are by the results hitherto of this traitorous war, self-confident and firm in their sense of right, will spend ten years of heroic fighting and ten thousand millions of money, before they will consent to forfeit these rights, or admit that they are in any degree in the wrong.

If a speedy peace is wished for, the South must be placed beyond the pale of public opinion. A moral blockade is necessary. One must turn aside and say, I do not know you ; you may win battles and shoot negroes, you may burn defenceless vessels, you may be able to accomplish all of which unbridled force is capable: you may do all this, but you cannot enlist the sympathies of a single honest man in Europe.

This state of "coventry" would have checked the arrogance of the South, and reacted upon the popular mind in the long run. The secret opposition of a portion of the Southern people would gradually have grown in strength, and finally the majority would have comprehended that they were the main stay of this terrible tragedy. A war for what object ? To maintain slavery for the benefit of one hundred thousand planters, deeply indebted and mortgaged to the North, and who find it convenient at present to pay their debts with musket balls.

The South cannot conquer. They have gained temporary advantages, but at this moment their armies are harmless and hemmed in beyond the possibility of escape. The South has to face a terrible enemy, one that strikes incessantly, and destroys them in detail. This enemy is Time. Every day exhausts them more and more. They are only able to carry on the war now, by conscription and paper money ; they have no longer any revenue or products, and the grass grows in more than one city in your kingdom.

The abolition of slavery has given the rebellion its death-blow. The Southerners may point a pistol at the heart of every negro ; but the sacred heaven of liberty will act—with greater or less rapidity, doubtless—yet it is destined in one way or another to work upon the minds of the enslaved race, and at this moment more than one negro is thinking of the northern bank of the Potomac, with his ear to the earth to catch the sound of the Federal artillery.

And as an opportunity now offers, I crave leave to render my homage to the patient genius of Mr. Lincoln. In France we have an incurable passion for theatrical effect in politics : we deem it fashionable to sneer at the energetic slowness of the Yankee President. Being unable, with our Gallic temperament, to comprehend those phlegmatic natures, that grow greater under defeat than victory—like Coligny or William of Orange—we ask of ourselves why Mr. Lincoln signed the emancipation bill with two clauses, the one decreeing the immediate, and the other the prospective abolition of slavery.

We reason as though Mr. Lincoln wielded a dictatorial, unrestricted power at the White House, accounting solely to the God of his conscience. But Mr. Lincoln simply presides over a republic where popular opinion rules, and he is surrounded by divers opinions upon the question of slavery. The democratic party wish to uphold it, and the republicans desire to abolish it, therefore Mr. Lincoln waits, with an eye fixed upon each side of the scale.

## XII.

No one knows better than Mr. Lincoln how to utilize defeat. When, by a bold victory, the South provoked the North to recognize the necessity of emancipation, Mr. Lincoln at once yielded and made a step forward. And in like manner, after the disaster at Chæroneæ, the Liucoln of Athens, did away with slavery, and when a slave thanked him he answered, you owe your freedom not to me but to Chæroneæ. I borrow this historical incident from Mr. Agénor de Gasparin's eloquent work.

I have faith in Lincoln, I believe in the old rail-splitter. At this moment he holds a world in his hand, and I hope that he will not let it fall ; but impossible as it seems, if, at some future day the North should mistrust itself and regret the old state of affairs in the past, what could such an act of weakness effect? The artery once opened, its tide could be arrested for an instant only.

I will even admit the hypothesis that the North may confess its powerlessness and say to the slave-whippers, to the rag-pickers of the Constitution, who have thrown it into their basket as though it were an old rag, I am wrong, and I am sorry. Let us call our witnesses and amicably establish our respective frontiers.

But where will you place the boundary? Perhaps you will lay it down along the line of the Potomac, a line so often won and lost, and watered with human blood, or by the long trail of the five hundred thousand corpses of what were once fathers, sons, brothers, men loving and beloved, who lie rotting now because the gentlemen of South Carolina thought fit one day to commit a double crime; a crime against humanity and a crime against their country.

You will set your stakes across this cemetery, above the almost uncovered bones mouldering there ; but sink them as deep as you may, they will not hold. You will sign a peace, but you will not have it ; for beneath the very feet of the plenipotentiaries this tragic soil, choked with the dead, will yaw and open to yield up the spectres of the Bull Run victims. In the absence of the living, the dead will rise to protest against this embrace between the aggressive South and the victimized North.

And think you that a few signatures written down side by side on a sheet of paper, will suffice to efface the recollection of this terrible slaughter. No, these reminiscences will remain written upon men's hearts in letters of fire and blood, and the widows in the most distant villages of the West will water them with their tears by their firesides and at their work.

North and South, you will ever regard each other with an angry eye. At the first opportunity you will break out again ; there will be another slaughter-house on the face of the earth, and the new world will have nothing to envy the old. Henceforward you must go armed and each keep up an army of four hundred thousand soldiers. You will attempt to avoid a momentary expense by a patched-up peace and before the end of the century your national debt will have reached two hundred or three hundred thousand millions. This is the ordinary cost of an army during one generation. If you doubt it inquire of Austria.

The day that a permanent army shall exist in North America, you may bid adieu to liberty, as it has been accepted and practised hitherto. With the danger of foreign war will come the doctrine of public safety, and governments will be made and unmade with the bayonet, as in Buenos-Avres. I cannot see how the commerce of Europe is to profit by this.

### XIII.

Should Europe, however, entertain the unfortunate idea of creating with her own hand, in the Gulf of Mexico, a cotton republic, a black state founded upon slavery, such a rash act would inflict upon the world an element of perturbation and a scourge more terrible than the cholera. Once master of its own movements, this pro-slavery government, this despicable and accursed political monstrosity, repulsive to the entire world, would speedily bid defiance to everything, aggravating in order to diminish the horror of its crime, and would become so powerful that it would finally command respect.

It would not be as in the past a disgraceful underhand attack upon Texas or Cuba ; it would be piracy exercised on a grand scale in order to render slavery universal. The slave trade would be carried on for reasons of state, and carried on in a royal manner by squadrons of vessels. From that day the negro would eternally wear the mourning of civilization upon his brow.

But, whatever may happen, I hope that France, the offspring of revolution, will never lend a hand to such an anachronism, and one so inconsistent with her past history ; did not the French revolution inaugurate negro emancipation and first grant the black the right of citizenship ? And as one reminiscence calls up others, I beg leave to mention here an incident of the present time, although it is already so distant that it seems like the past.

It was in February. Revolution was everywhere at work, and throughout Europe every instant a fresh explosion announced the fall of another kingdom. All Paris was on foot ; the streets were alive ; and clouds of smoke floated in the air. The wind was laden with words as though an invisible spirit spoke in the mist. The crowd marched restlessly and excitedly from street to street with colors flying and drums beating, parading their chimera and their hope ; their truth or their dream.

But above this agitated, swaying sea of humanity, above its uproar and tumult, in the calm region of high inspirations and sacred desires, the new republic, serene and holy, looked mentally beyond the sea. Full of the love of human dignity and everywhere present where there was a wound to heal, the new republic drew up the decree abolishing slavery, and the eleven members of the provisional government signed it. When the last signer laid down his pen they threw themselves into each other's arms and embraced with all the joy of the workmen of humanity after doing a good act.

Ah ! the men, whoever they were, who signed that decree may be forgotten now, but their short term of power was not spent in vain. Had a king signed it, such a decree would have sufficed to make his reign glorious. The provisional government were not even allowed the credit of it. Serve humanity and such will be your reward ! But the good was accomplished and it remains. The divine spirit has also its day in our country, and if this day is drawing to its close, there are at least others beyond the ocean to whom the last revolution has given the right to shout for Liberty !

This, Sire, is what I had to say to Your Majesty. I have finished ; but let me give you a parting word of advice. I will not appeal to your heart, for that would be speaking to the absent : I will appeal simply to your interests, then I may have some chance of fixing your attention.

Believe me and tempt destiny no longer. Remember the example of the French nobility. They left the soil rather than submit to common law, and the soil passed from them into the hands of a class sprung from revolution and identified with liberty. Since that day the French nation has formed one family. I leave you to meditate, Sire, upon this lesson of history.

How many vassals have you in reality? Scarcely a hundred thousand. These alone are guilty of the insurrection. All that will be necessary will be to turn their plantations into money and introduce the population of the West into this regenerated section. This is the way to solve the slavery question and effect the reconciliation of the South. And now, Sire, I pray God to have you in his keeping, to correct you and incline you toward repentance. Amend, Sire, otherwise one may soon see in Paris a ragged old man asking the police for a passport in order to follow the Duke of Modena to Venice. That old man will be King Cotton.

THE END.







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